

The Corn Ear-Worm

Sweet corn oftentimes is infested with the corn ear-worm. The presence of this pest is quite disgusting and detracts much from the market value of the corn. Both field and sweet corn are attacked in Pennsylvania. There is at least two full generations of the worms and likely a part of a third. The first generation attacks the blades of corn while the corn is quite young. The second and the third generations attack the ear. The eggs are laid on the silk, and the young larvae hatch and begin feeding on the silk at once.

Control Measures. Probably the best method of control is the dusting of the corn silk with a dust composed of equal parts by weight of sulphur and powdered arsenate of lead. Under ordinary conditions, there is not sufficient damage to field corn to warrant dusting, but in sweet corn plantings, in years when the insect is numerous, it will certainly pay roasting ear growers to apply the dust. The best way of applying the dust is by means of a small hand duster. It is necessary to apply the poison to the silk while the latter is very young because later the adult moths lay the eggs in the silk and the larvae, which hatch out, eat their way downward into the corn.

Attacks Many Plants. This same insect attacks tobacco, being known as a Tobacco bud-worm, and growing cotton in which case it is known as the cotton boll-worm. In Pennsylvania, okra, peppers, eggplant, pumpkins, squash, mellons and cucumbers and sometimes potatoes, as well as corn, are attacked.

The Corn ear-worm passes the winter in the ground as pupae, having worked its way into the soil to a depth of from two to seven inches before pupation. Where fields have been heavily infested, it is advisable to plow the ground in the fall, thus bringing up the pupae and exposing them to their natural enemies.

Confused With Corn Borer. The Corn ear-worm larvae are easily confused with the larvae of the European corn borer. The Corn ear-worm is usually larger than the larvae of the European corn borer. For a definite determination the larvae should be sent to a state or federal entomologist.

